



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**MOLDOVA**

# SUCCESS STORY

## Building Businesses and Friendships

### Dairy grows financially as farmers learn tips from American peers



Photo: CNFA

Leonid Platon (right) explains his cooperative's annual financial results to Robert Binversie (center), an American volunteer who came to Moldova to advise local dairy farmers.

***"A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle," said Robert Binversie, a farmer who volunteered to share his experience with others in Moldova.***

Moldovan mechanic Leonid Platon was as stunned as everybody else was when the Communist system fell apart. Uncertainty, poverty and a lack of business skills left him struggling to feed his family in the early years of Moldova's independence. Putting his fears aside, he saved his money and forged ahead to start a small dairy farm.

An entrepreneurial young man, Leonid soon became the leader of a group of dairy farmers. Today, the Volodeni Dairy Producers Group, which consists of about 280 dairy farmers from the neighboring villages of Volodeni and Blesteni, produces three metric tons of milk daily.

While the farmers aspired to be more successful, they lacked experience to grow, since many of them were very small producers, with fewer than ten cows apiece on average.

Volunteers from a USAID program came to Moldova to share their experience and suggest simple, cost-effective ways to improve the group's operations in areas such as dairy cattle housing, sanitation, nutrition, and basic husbandry. To encourage the project's growth, one of the volunteers, Robert Binversie, gave Leonid a \$10,000 personal loan to build a modern silage bunker.

By implementing the volunteers' recommendations, the farmers saw great results: increased milk yields, enlarged herds, improved cattle housing conditions and higher prices for clean milk. They achieved a \$10,000 increase in milk sales and a 39% increase in net profit for the group in just one year. The large increase in revenue translated to an increase in the payroll as well, with permanent employees' incomes increasing by 31% on average.

The following spring, Robert sponsored Leonid to come visit him and other program volunteers in the United States. The trip was an opportunity for Leonid to learn more about American agriculture and meet the families of the volunteers who had made such a big impact on him and his community. Based on what he has seen and learned in the United States, and with help from additional volunteers, Leonid is now on his way to building a modern milking parlor to serve his village.